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WI Delegation Supports Request for Federal Aid

The Wisconsin Congressional delegation today sent a letter to President Bush supporting Governor Jim Doyle's appeal of the Administration's denial of a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Wisconsin.

The letter, sent by Senators Kohl and Feingold, and Reps. Baldwin, Kind, Obey, Moore, Ryan, Sensenbrenner, Petri, and Green, argues that the rejection of a federal major disaster declaration will have severe adverse affects on local municipal and county budgets for years to come.

"I call on President Bush and FEMA to reverse their ill-advised decision and issue a major disaster declaration immediately for the affected areas," said Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin. "The need is evident, federal assistance is warranted, and the people of Wisconsin, especially those suffering physical, financial, and emotional damage from the storms, deserve federal attention and relief," Baldwin said.

"FEMA made a mistake in denying emergency aid to the Wisconsin communities impacted by the August tornadoes," stated Rep. Ron Kind. "There are unmet needs that must be addressed, and federal assistance is critical to helping residents and businesses make a full recovery. Furthermore, the numbers show that damage to public facilities and private property was significant enough to justify aid. As far as I'm concerned, this appeal is FEMA's opportunity to reverse a bad decision and deliver assistance to communities that truly need it," Kind said.

"The tornadoes that ripped through south central Wisconsin last August took a devastating toll and federal assistance is crucial to helping the affected communities rebuild," Sen. Russ Feingold said. "I strongly urge the president and FEMA to reverse their decision to reject emergency aid for Dane, Richland, and Vernon counties. These communities were devastated by the storms and they should get the help they need," said Feingold.

"From the dairy farms in Richland to small businesses in Dane County, the people of Wisconsin need the assistance of the federal government in order to fully recover from the havoc wreaked by the 27 tornadoes that touched down in our state a few months ago. It is time for the Administration and FEMA to reevaluate their decision to deny Wisconsin the tools they need to rebuild," said Senator Herb Kohl.

(more)

Wisconsin is appealing the September 23, 2005 decision to deny the disaster declaration for the record-breaking 27 tornadoes that occurred on August 18, 2005, causing damage in nine counties. The counties hit hardest were Dane, Richland, and Vernon. Damage in these counties significantly exceeded the FEMA threshold. The affected municipalities incurred even greater damage, most severely in the Village of Viola in Richland and Vernon counties (\$985.00 per capita).

The state of Wisconsin has suffered from seven other significant disasters in 2005 for which no request for federal assistance was made. These events resulted in more than \$4.1 million in public assistance costs. The state of Wisconsin, its counties and municipalities have always shouldered the burdens that are rightfully theirs. However, the state has made it clear that due to the severity of the August 18 storms, effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state, county and local governments and that federal assistance is needed and necessary.

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